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DE RUEHGP #2092/01 3251126
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 211126Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4473
INFO RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE
RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2053
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1890
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SINGAPORE 002092

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [EINV](#) [ECON](#) [SENV](#) [ASEAN](#) [SN](#)

SUBJECT: ASEAN SIGNS CHARTER AND ECONOMIC BLUEPRINT, ISSUES
ENVIRO STATEMENTS

REF: A. SINGAPORE 2086 (BURMA SQUASHES GAMBARI BRIEFING)

- [1](#)B. SINGAPORE 2075 (ASEAN-BIS MEETINGS)
- [1](#)C. SINGAPORE 2052 (LOW EXPECTATIONS FOR ASEAN SUMMIT)
- [1](#)D. SINGAPORE 2085 (ASEAN SIGNS CHARTER)

[1](#)1. (U) While controversy over Burma dominated headlines as leaders concluded the 13th ASEAN Summit in Singapore November 20 (ref A), member-countries and many regional observers preferred to focus on what they saw as a potential turning point in ASEAN's forty year history. The leaders signed two key documents -- the ASEAN Charter and the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint -- intended to lay the foundation for the region's eventual transformation into a more integrated and influential political and economic entity. They also issued statements on environmental sustainability and climate change. Below, we offer brief summaries of key features of the Charter, Blueprint, and Declarations. The complete texts of all ASEAN Summit documents are available at www.13aseansummit.org.sg. The ASEAN 3 (including ASEAN plus China, Japan, and South Korea), East Asia, and ASEAN-European Union (EU) summits continue November 21-22.

ASEAN: Let's Get this Charter Started!

(SBU) The Eminent Persons Group that provided the vision for the Charter had hoped for mechanisms that would move beyond ASEAN's strict consensus-based decision-making and would ensure the "compliance" of member-states with their ASEAN commitments (Ref B). But the final document reinforced the consensus approach and has only weak compliance mechanisms. Even so, many local analysts and officials felt that it was a significant achievement to get all ten ASEAN members, which vary widely in levels of political and economic development, to sign a document committing them to adhere to principles of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and good governance (ref C). The weakness of compliance mechanisms took on added significance in the context of the Burma crisis, though most observers here believe it is better to have Burma signed on to the Charter's principles as a benchmark for future behavior than to have it outside of the organization. While the Charter falls short of what many here had hoped for, officials stress that it is a "living document" that will change over time. (See ref D for text and a synopsis of the Charter).

ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint

¶3. (U) As expected, the ten ASEAN leaders on November 20 signed the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint (ref C). The Blueprint maps out ASEAN's creation of a single market by 2015, five years earlier than initially planned. The Blueprint identifies four priority sectors (air services, "e-ASEAN", healthcare, and tourism) where tariffs and other barriers will be removed on an accelerated schedule by 2010. While the Blueprint's goal is the free movement of goods, services, labor, and investment, the document also acknowledges the need to balance economic progress with "equitable development." Most observers expect ASEAN to move more quickly on economic than political issues, but questions about the Blueprint remain. As reported Ref E, some Ministers have voiced concerns about the ability of all members to remove all trade barriers and open their economies to competition in such a short timeframe, in particular targets that are supposed to be achieved as early as 2009.

Declaration on Environmental Sustainability

¶4. (U) ASEAN's Declaration on Environmental Sustainability noted the effect of climate change in developing countries on environmental, social, health, and economic advancement. Leaders agreed to increase cooperation on environmentally sustainable practices and to encourage participation by non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and academia in a "holistic approach" to collaboration. The Declaration identifies numerous areas for improvement, from mitigation of air and water pollution (including trans-boundary concerns) to access to clean drinking water,

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from deforestation to climate change. ASEAN will also work to establish an organization-wide nuclear safety regime. On trade, the members agreed to strengthen efforts to implement the ASEAN Regional Action Plan on Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora.

Declaration on Climate Change

¶5. (U) The leaders also reaffirmed their commitment to address climate change and greenhouse gas level stabilization in accordance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol. The ASEAN Declaration on the 13th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC and the 3rd Session of the CMP to the Kyoto Protocol recognizes that climate change requires a "global solution." However, citing "historic responsibility, economic strength, and capabilities," ASEAN specifically urges Annex-I Parties to reduce emissions and implement commitments to technology transfer and capacity building. The Declaration calls on all countries to consider climate change when developing their national development policies. Members also agreed to enhance cooperation and committed to participate "actively and constructively" to ensure a successful outcome at the December UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol meetings in Bali.

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